

GPO Celebrates 160 Years of Keeping America Informed

We Are Family

Many GPO teammates work together with not only their “GPO Family” but also with their real family. Some families have been at GPO for several decades. Generations of these families – grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren – have been here to experience important moments in GPO’s history. Here are a few of their stories.

The Crawford Family

3 Generations – 12 Family Members



GPO’s John Crawford first started at the agency making \$4 an hour on third shift. Today, he oversees all of the agency’s Plant Operations.

GPO Managing Director of Plant Operations John Crawford has been at the agency nearly 55 years. He is one of three generations who worked at GPO over the course of 110 years. In those three generations, a dozen of Crawford’s family members have worked at GPO.

Crawford’s grandfather Norris was a Bookbinder at GPO who was eventually promoted to Supervisor. His brother worked at GPO as a manager in Customer Services. Crawford’s cousin worked at GPO as a Bookbinder in the 1980s and was working an Assistant Foreperson when he retired. Crawford also has three aunts who were some of the first bindery workers who worked at GPO. Crawford’s uncle worked at GPO. His son Nick worked in GPO Creative Services.

Since joining the agency in 1966, Crawford has been at GPO for some of the agency’s most historic moments, including the production of President Richard Nixon’s inaugural materials, the automation of passport production, and the transitions from letterpress to offset to digital presses.

Crawford describes GPO as “unbelievable” and

“enormous” in the 1980s, when the agency had more than 8,000 employees. Because of the large numbers of employees, lunch breaks were staggered from 11:20 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the closest parking he could get was four or five blocks away. Prepress alone had a couple thousand people (the size of the entire agency today). It was bustling with employees setting type for the Congressional Record, Federal Register, bills, and more.

“When I started at GPO, our jobs were very labor-intensive,” said Crawford.

He says the Federal Registers, which can be 700 or 800 pages, could only be one inch thick because of the side wire stitching technique. Because of this, GPO had to produce multiple books for large Federal Registers and couldn’t deliver them until all the books were complete.

“Now we can make books two or three inches thick,” said Crawford. “Instead of having multiple books, we can make just one.”

He says just to mail the Federal Registers was an incredibly taxing job. Bags of product were sent down a shoot from the fifth floor down to the basement where they were put on a conveyor belt.



GPO Managing Director of Plant Operations John Crawford and son Nick stand in the plant in 2010.

The belt took the products on a journey under North Capitol Street to the main Post Office where employees would pull them out and sort them. Today, GPO uses mail machines to deliver products using far less man power.

He says the President's budget for the Federal Government used to take five weeks to produce. Today, it only takes about five days.

Crawford says before GPO went digital, the agency was printing close to 40,000 Federal Registers per day and about 20,000 Congressional Records per day. Today, the agency only prints a few thousand Registers and Records per day but sees thousands of downloads per day on www.govinfo.gov.

Crawford describes the intensive measures GPO took when producing secure

products. The security room acted as a "mini bindery" with only top-secret products, including materials from China and Russia.

"One security person from bindery and one security person from press would sit there to verify the count of our machine," said Crawford. "We had to have the balance of those sheets down to the exact number in our storage lock up. We had to account for everything. If a sheet got torn apart, we would use scotch tape to put it back together."

He says passport production has also changed significantly since he first started.

"We had bookbinders hand-covering the passport books and bindery workers hand-numbering each passport," explained Crawford. "If a thread broke,

it took five hours to rethread it. We didn't make as many passports back then as we do now, but we knew we'd eventually need a better system."

Around the mid-1980s, GPO acquired its very first automated passport machine.

When he joined the agency, offset presses were the new technology starting to replace letterpresses. In 2019, Crawford helped in GPO's decision to purchase six new digital inkjet presses that automated the agency's workflow.

"Each technology change was amazing in its own right," said Crawford. "I embraced each one because I knew it was good for the future of GPO. It took time for everyone to accept all the changes."



John Crawford is one of a dozen Crawfords to have worked at GPO over the course of 110 years.

The Adams Family

3 Generations – 7 Family Members



GPO's April King (left) and Deborah Smith (right) are sisters whose family has been a long-standing constant at GPO.

Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Documents Deborah Smith has been at GPO nearly 50 years. When her younger sister April King was nine years old, Smith brought King to GPO for the holidays.

"I remember Deborah taking us to see Santa at GPO," said King. "They had the train and the big tree in Harding Hall."

Once King graduated high school, her sister suggested she work at GPO. King was all about the idea. Now, just like her older sister, King is a GPO veteran, having worked at the agency for 35 years.

"I love working at GPO with my sister because April represents our family well," said Smith. "I always receive high compliments of her from

my colleagues at the agency."

Their dad Lonnie Adams also worked at GPO as a Supervisory Pressman on the 5th floor. He retired in 1971 after 35 years of service, right as Smith was joining the agency.

"He loved working at GPO," Smith said of her father, who has since passed.

Smith recalls the shift in both changing the agency's name from Government Printing Office to Government Publishing Office and changing the title Public Printer to Director.

"Some people weren't in agreement with the name changes because those were the names they had been using for so many years," said Smith. "It took a while to get used to saying



Supervisory Pressman Lonnie Adams was the first member of the Smith family to work at GPO.



GPO Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Documents Deborah Smith has seen many changes in the nearly 50 years she's been with the agency.

Government Publishing Office and Director, but it all fell in line and made sense with the digital transformation of the agency."

Smith also remembers physical changes to the agency space.

"In the early 90s, personnel outgrew the fifth floor," said Smith. "GPO decided to lease out two floors at Union Center Plaza (UCP). The Superintendent of Documents and everyone under them moved to UCP a few blocks down North Capitol Street."

Smith says that the cafeteria was much different back when she started at GPO in the 1970s.

"When the cafeteria was there, everyone pretty much met in there for breakfast or lunch and you would see everyone," said Smith.

Smith also remembers GPO when the agency

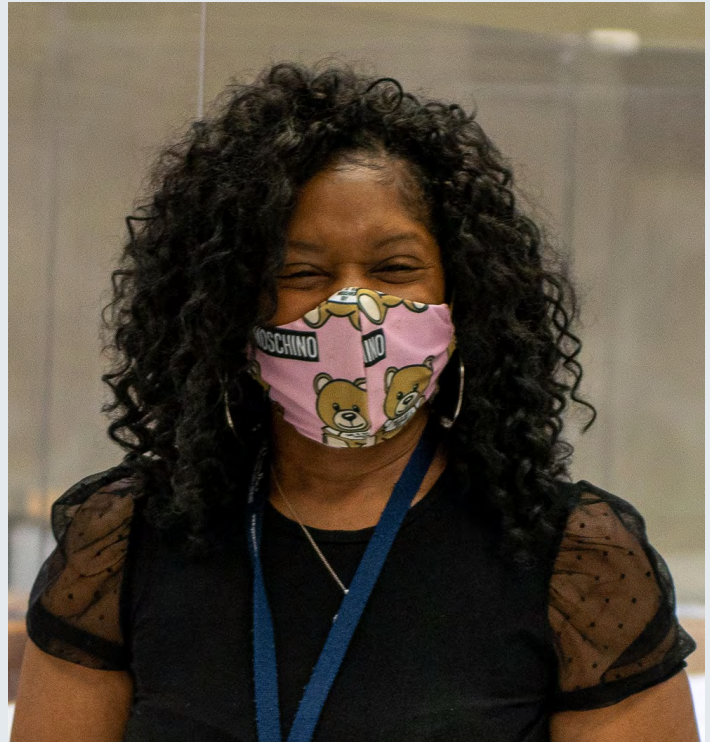
required passes to leave the building.

"We had to have a pass any time we left the building," said Smith. "If you went to the Doctor, the police had to stamp your pass and you had to take it back to your supervisor."

Smith says one thing she misses from GPO's past are the carolers of the GPO choir, who would walk around the building and sing at Christmastime.

About a year ago, King encouraged her husband, Roosevelt Jones, to apply for a job at GPO. He now works as a truck driver for the agency, delivering the Congressional Record and Federal Register to the Hill every day.

Three of Smith's grandchildren have also worked at GPO as summer interns. One stayed to work at GPO after her internship for about a year.



April King went through a 4-year Apprenticeship Prepress Program prior to becoming a Printer/Proofreader at GPO.



GPO Printer/Proofreader April King encouraged her husband Roosevelt Jones, who is a GPO Truck Driver, to work for the agency.

The Newell-Bilger Family

4 Generations – 7 Family Members



GPO Chief of Customer Accounts Robin Bilger is one of four generations of Newell-Bilgers to work at GPO.

“When I was in high school, my grandfather drove me down to the Convention Center where they were having a job fair,” said GPO Chief of Customer Accounts Robin Bilger. “The GPO table was the first place I walked to submit my resume. GPO was in my family history. It was in my blood.”

Bilger’s grandfather Ray L. Newell, Jr. worked at GPO as a pressman at GPO from 1967–1991.

“My grandfather talked about the people he worked with at GPO and how wonderful they were,” said Bilger. “He said GPO wasn’t just a place to work. It was a family.”

Bilger grew up living with her grandparents and mother and said it was rare for her grandfather, who worked second shift, to get home

before midnight. He routinely worked seven days a week.

Her mother Sherian (Newell) Roberts worked at GPO for 43 years. She started as a secretary in offset and retired as a head-deskperson in pre-press editing the Congressional Record and Federal Register.

In 1990, Bilger joined her family at GPO working in Personnel. Over the last 30 years, she has gotten to know the inner-workings of GPO as part of General Procurement, Bookbinding, Customer Services, and now Finance.

Along the way, she’s had even more of her family members join the GPO team. Her uncle Stacy Newell, following in his dad’s footsteps, joined GPO as a pressman in 1998.

“I’m sure my grandfather and uncle are running a press



Pressman Stacy Newell, son of Ray Newell, joined GPO as a pressman in 1998.



Ray L. Newell, Bilger's grandfather, worked at GPO as a pressman. The two overlapped at the agency for one year from 1990–1991.

shop together in Heaven," said Bilger.

Stacy's wife Darlynn Newell joined the agency in 1980 and worked at GPO for 38 years. Darlynn worked in the Production Manager's Office where she retired in 2018. Darlynn's father DuWayne Brown worked at GPO as the Chief Cash Management Branch in the Finance Department. He started at GPO in 1966 and retired in 2001.

Even Bilger's son Cullen has spent some time at GPO. He worked as an IT summer

intern in 2018.

"Sometimes people ask me why I never changed agencies," said Bilger who has been at GPO 30 years. "I tell them I never had a desire to leave."

Bilger says during the holidays as a child, her grandmother packed her and the neighborhood kids into the car and drove them to GPO to see Santa and get gifts. She also remembers her mom talking about the bell system.

"My mom worked dayside at GPO and would often talk about the bell system," said

Bilger. "I never experienced the bells myself but heard a lot about them."

Having started at GPO just four years out of high school as a PG-5, Bilger says it is "unimaginable" that she made it to where she is today and says she takes pride in her work at GPO.

"This is where I started. This is where I'm going to end," said Bilger. "GPO is in my history. It has been putting bread on my family's table for over 52 years."

The Grennon Family

3 Generations – 4 Family Members



GPO Controller William (Bill) Grennon III's grandfather, mother, and father all retired from GPO. His grandfather served in the Army in WWI and his father served in the Navy in WWII.



William Grennon Sr. was the first Grennon to work at GPO, joining the agency in 1936.

GPO has seen three generations of Grennons since 1936.

"In 1936, my grandfather, William Grennon Sr., moved the whole family from New Orleans to Washington, DC to take a job as a Bookbinder at GPO," said GPO Controller William (Bill) Grennon III. "My dad was 11 years old at the time."

In 1958, Grennon III was born. His dad joined his grandfather working at GPO as a Bookbinder.

In 1980, Grennon III joined GPO, making three generations of Grennons to have worked at the agency. He took a job working in the Human Capital department. That same year, his father, who was working under John Crawford at the time, retired from the agency after 22 years at GPO. Grennon III's mother Hazel also worked at GPO in the Superintendent of Documents sales program from the 1960s until 1985.

"It's neat to have that much history at GPO," said Grennon III. "Every time I walk through the bindery

area, I think of how my father and grandfather worked here. It's kind of like walking through hallowed grounds."

Grennon III still has a copy of the Warren Commission Report that his father bound in the 1960s.

Two years into his career at GPO, Grennon III transitioned from the Human Capital department to Finance where he still works today.

"I worked on the first IBM PC in the building," said Grennon III. "I remember someone telling me PCs were just a fad and that they would fade away."

Grennon III, who has worked at GPO 41 years now, says he never expected to spend so much of his career at GPO.

"I didn't think I would stay that long, but here I am 40 years later," said Grennon III. "Not soon after I joined GPO, the future of ink on paper was looking grim. But GPO was able to evolve and transform into the publishing arena. Now, it's lasted 160 years."



William Grennon, Jr. joined GPO in 1958 as a Bookbinder.

The Boesch Family

3 Generations – 4 Family Members



GPO Chief Financial Officer Bill Boesch says he believes GPO has lasted 160 years because of the agency's ability to embrace new technology and listen to customer needs.

GPO Chief Finance Officer Bill Boesch remembers sightseeing around Washington, DC when his father went to GPO to turn in his application to work at the agency. His dad was hired and started working at GPO in 1968 as a Linotype Operator setting type in molten lead by hand and later went to work in Customer Services. Boesch's mother also worked at GPO as an Executive Assistant in Data System Services, which later became the Office of Information Systems Research Management, similar to GPO's IT department today.

"There was so much work to be done," said Boesch of a busy GPO during the 1970s. "My father worked almost every Saturday and sometimes on Sunday. I

remember Super Bowl III between the Colts and the Jets in 1969. It was on a Sunday and my father had to work. He got home as quickly as possible in time to see the second half of the game."

Boesch's great-great uncle, Marion Brewington, also worked at GPO in the Composing Room from the 1920's through the late 1940's.

Hearing stories from his parents about GPO's important work supporting Congress, Boesch says he grew interested in working at GPO himself. He graduated from college on a Thursday in 1979 and started work at GPO the very next Monday.

When Boesch first started, GPO was still using a very large Electronic Accounting Machine that he says would

make all kinds of noise to produce just one line of information. Books weren't closed until three full months after the month ended, and financial reports were hand-delivered to all the heads of the business units.

"I got here just at the right time," said Boesch. "In 1980, we were automating our general ledger."

He says GPO purchased a state-of-the-art McCormack and Dodge software for \$100,000, a price some at the agency found "out-of-this-world," according to Boesch.

Boesch says finance kept that system until Y2K, when people began to fear that systems might blow up once the year 2000 arrived. At that point, GPO began to look at new software and the GPO finance team, along with

several other business units, created a Y2K task force. Members of the Hill requested that Boesch and the finance team submit a report to the Hill on Y2K issues. In 1989, GPO converted to Oracle software. When Public Printer Bruce James arrived at GPO in the early 2000s, the finance department began to replace all systems at an accelerated rate.

The Chambers Family
2 Generations – 4 Family Members



GPO Financial Data Analyst Ken Chambers worked on one of GPO's first computers in 1975.



Larry Reed Jr., son of GPO's Ken and Sandra Chambers, works at GPO in Plant Operations.

GPO Financial Data Analyst Ken Chambers and his brother were interviewed and hired to the agency on the spot.

Chambers first joined GPO in February 1973 as a Clerk in the Superintendent of Documents, Cash Mail Section. He was responsible for creating, updating and maintaining the plastic cards that were used to determine whether books were in or out of stock. It was important to keep those cards up-to-date since the accuracy of phone orders directly depended on this information. Many plastic cards were kept organized in card catalog files that lined the walls and hallway throughout the entire section.

While at GPO, he taught himself how to use a

computer and went on to train many coworkers to use the computer.

"Learning how to use a computer is one of the most exciting things I've ever done," said Chambers. "The other employees in my group knew that I was always trying to learn something new, and I was asked often by various members of our group what I was doing. My answer was that I was trying to learn how we can use this new computer for the work we do."

During his time at GPO, Chambers met and married his wife Sandra, who is the Executive Assistant to GPO's Director. Their oldest son, Larry Reed, also works at GPO in Plant Operations.

The Matthews Family

1 Generation – 2 Family Members

GPO Customer Contact Center Supervisor Darlene Matthews and her husband, Senior IT Program Manager John Matthews, say they've become better friends since working at GPO. The couple was at GPO for many historic moments, including a presentation by Jesse Jackson, the 2011 earthquake, and the September 11 terrorist attacks.

"We've been married 37 years and I believe it's because we work together every day," said John. "I can understand her more because I know her friends at work."

"It has made us better friends to share that extra time in the car driving to work and eating lunch together," added Darlene. "It makes us closer. I can easily go into his office and talk to him."

John says he has seen the agency grow tremendously since first starting at GPO 45 years ago.

"In 1975, GPO was demographically and culturally a lot different than it is today," said John. "To live through that growth and to have seen the first African American and first woman to become Public Printer, as well as the diversity we have now, has been remarkable."

Both John and Darlene took the Civil Service Entrance Exam when they were applying for GPO.

"At that time, you had to take a test to get into the Government," said Darlene. "It went over literary knowledge, arithmetic, and abstract reasoning."

John says that the concept of the GPO family is real.



Husband and wife pair John and Darlene Matthews say working at GPO together makes them better friends.

"I've known generations of families at GPO," said John. "There aren't many Government agencies out there that have people working there for 40 or 50 years. These people you work with eight to ten hours a day for decades become as

close to you as your personal family."

"That's the reason I've never gone to another agency in 34 years," added Darlene. "There's an atmosphere where people show love. GPO has a lot of love."

The Edwards Family

1 Generation – 2 Family Members



Prior to COVID-19, Blake and Sarah Edwards rode their bikes into work.

GPO Project Manager Blake Edwards met his wife GPO Finance Analyst Sarah Edwards at a happy hour the day he interviewed at GPO.

"We talked briefly but not much," said Edwards of his first encounter with his now wife at the happy hour in 2003. "I started at GPO six months later. We got to be friends and eventually started dating."

Prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the couple rode their bikes to work together. One bike is all geared up so they can take turns picking up and dropping off their two kiddos on the

way to work.

"I love working at the same agency as my wife," said Edwards. "We get to eat lunch together either in the cafeteria or on the roof of GPO nearly every day. Not every couple gets to do that."

Edwards played a major role in GPO's digital transformation over the years. He was part of the team that launched GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys), now **govinfo**.

"I think GPO has survived 160 years because of the people," said Edwards. "The people who work at GPO believe in GPO's mission."